



Lecture # 10 Part 3

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

II. AUTHOR

- E. Evidence for John himself as the primary source for the material of the Gospel
1. Internal evidence
 - f. the author seems to be a member of the inner circle along with Peter
 - a) [John 13:24](#)
 - b) [John 20:2](#)
 - c) [John 21:7](#)
 - d) the name John, son of Zebedee, never appears in this Gospel, which seems highly unusual because he was a member of the Apostolic inner circle
 2. External evidence
 - a. Gospel known by
 - 1) **Irenaeus (A.D. 120–202)** who was associated with Polycarp, knew John the Apostle (cf. Eusebius' *Historical Eccleasticus* 5:20:6-7) — “John the disciple of the Lord who reclined on His breast and himself issued the Gospel at Ephesus in Asia” (*Haer*, 3:1:1, quoted in Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 5:8:4).
 - 2) **Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 153–217)** — “John who was urged by his friends and divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel” (Eusebius' *Historical Eccleasticus* 6:14:7)
 - 3) **Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165)** in his *Dialogue with Trypho* 81:4
 - 4) **Tertullian (A.D. 145–220)**
 - b. John's authorship asserted by very early witnesses
 - 1) **Polycarp (A.D. 70–156**, recorded by Irenaeus), who was bishop of Smyrna (A.D. 155)
 - 2) **Papias (A.D. 70–146**, recorded by the *Anti-Marconite Prologue* from Rome and Eusebius), who was the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia and reported to be a disciple of John the Apostle
- F. Reasons used to doubt traditional authorship
1. The Gospel's connection with gnostic themes
 2. The obvious appendix of [John chapter 21](#)
 3. The chronological discrepancies with the Synoptics
 4. John would not have referred to himself as “**the beloved disciple**”
 5. John's Jesus uses different vocabulary and genres than the Synoptics



Lecture # 10 Part 3

- G. If we assume it was John the Apostle then what can we assume about the man?
1. He wrote from Ephesus (Irenaeus says “issued the Gospel from Ephesus”)
 2. He wrote when he was an older man (Irenaeus says he lived until the reign of **Trajan, A.D. 98–117**)

III. DATE

- A. If we assume John the Apostle
1. **before A.D. 70**, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman General (later Emperor), Titus
 - a. in [John 5:2](#), “**Now in Jerusalem near the sheepgate there is a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, which has five porticoes...**”
 - b. repeated use of the early title “**disciples**” to denote the apostolic group
 - c. supposed later gnostic elements have now been discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which show they were part of the theological jargon of the first century
 - d. no mention of the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in **A.D. 70**
 - e. the famous American archaeologist **W. F. Albright** asserts a date for the Gospel in the late **70’s** or early **80’s**
 2. later in the first century
 - a. the developed theology of John
 - b. the fall of Jerusalem not mentioned because it occurred some twenty years earlier
 - c. John’s use of gnostic-type phrasing and emphasis
 - d. the early traditions of the church
 - 1) **Irenaeus**
 - 2) **Eusebius**
- B. If we assume “John the elder” then the date would be early to mid-second century. This theory started with Dionysius’ rejection of John the Apostle’s authorship (for literary reasons). Eusebius, who rejected John the Apostle’s authorship of Revelation for theological reasons, felt he had found another “John” at the right time and in the right place in **Papias’** quote ([Historical Ecclesiasticus 3:39:5,6](#)), which lists two “Johns” (1) the Apostle and (2) an Elder (presbyter).

IV. RECIPIENTS

- A. Originally it was written to the churches of the Roman Province of Asia Minor, particularly Ephesus.
- B. Because of the profound simplicity and depth of this account of the life and person of Jesus of Nazareth this became a favorite Gospel for both Hellenistic Gentile believers and gnostic groups.



Lecture # 10 Part 3

V. PURPOSES

- A. The Gospel itself asserts its evangelistic purpose, [John 20:30–31](#)
 1. for Jewish readers
 2. for Gentile readers
 3. for incipient gnostic readers
- B. It seems to have an apologetic thrust
 1. against the fanatic followers of John the Baptist
 2. against the incipient gnostic false teachers (especially the Prologue); these groups can be seen in the NT books of
 - a. [Ephesians](#)
 - b. [Colossians](#)
 - c. the Pastoral Epistles ([I Timothy](#), [Titus](#), [II Timothy](#))
 - d. [I John](#) ([I John](#) may have functioned as a cover letter for the Gospel)
- C. There is the possibility that the purpose statement of [John 20:31](#) may be understood as encouraging the doctrine of perseverance as well as evangelism because of the consistent use of the PRESENT TENSE to describe salvation. In this sense John, like James, may be balancing an over-emphasis of Paul's theology by some groups in Asia Minor (cf. [2 Peter 3:15–16](#)). It is surprising that early church tradition identifies John with Ephesus, not Paul (cf. F. F. Bruce's *Peter, Stephen, James and John: Studies in Non-Pauline Christianity*, pp. 120–121).
- D. The Epilogue ([John chapter 21](#)) seems to answer specific questions of the early church
 1. John supplements the accounts of the Synoptic Gospels. However, he focuses on the Judean ministry, particularly Jerusalem.
 2. The two questions covered in the Appendix, chapter 21
 - a. Peter's restoration
 - b. John's longevity
 - c. Jesus' delayed return
- E. Some see John as de-emphasizing sacramentalism by purposefully ignoring and not recording or discussing the ordinances themselves despite perfect contextual opportunities in [John chapter 3](#) (for baptism) and [John chapter 6](#) (for the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper).